DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 385 293 IR 055 579

AUTHOR	O'Brien, Eileen; And Others
TITLE	Libraries/Media Centers in Schools: Are There Sufficient Resources? Issue Brief.
INSTITUTION	National Center for Educational Statistics (ED), Washington, D.C.
REPORT NO	IB-3-95; NCES-95-779
PUB DATE	Jul 95
NOTE	4p.; Based on "1990-91 Schools and Staffing Survey," see ED 359 225.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Educational Change; Information Sources; Information Technology; *Learning Resources Centers; *Librarian Teacher Cooperation; Library Facilities; Library Materials; Library Personnel; *Library Role; Private Schools; Public Schools; *School Libraries; *School Surveys; Tables (Data); Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

The 1990-91 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), provided estimates of library/media center resources and helps to put into perspective the question of the role of libraries/media centers in school reform. Education reform has prompted increased attention to the role school libraries/media centers might play in applying new technology and developing new teaching methods. Data from the 1990-91 SASS show that libraries/media centers are in most public and private schools in the nation, but are understaffed in many cases, particularly in small schools. When library/media center facilities and staff are available, between one-quarter and one-third of teachers strongly agree that they work with library/media center staff in planning instruction. Additional examination is needed of the characteristics of schools that effectively use their library resources and of the types of barriers that prevent the greater availability of these resources. Four tables provide statistics for public and private schools. (Author/AEF)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U S DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

ED 385 293

Issue Brief - July 1995:
Libraries/Media Centers in Schools: Are There Sufficient Resources?

by US Dept. of Education

IR 055 579

ISSUE BRIEF

Libraries/Media Centers in Schools: Are There Sufficient Resources?

JULY 1995
IB-3-95

Libraries/media centers in schools are an important component of the education process. Recent interest in libraries has focused on the contribution school libraries/media centers might make to the current education reform movement. In particular, some reform advocates hope that library/media center staff will become key players in the effort to move teaching methods away from textbook-based instruction toward an emphasis on interactive and resource-based methods. The 1990-91 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), provides estimates of library/media center resources and helps to put into perspective the question of the role of libraries/media centers in school reform.

Most schools have libraries/media centers, but many are understaffed or not staffed at all.

In 1990-91, about 96 percent of public and about 87 percent of private schools had libraries/media centers (table 1). In addition, as many public schools serving 50 percent or more students receiving free or reduced-price lunches (i.e., high-poverty-concentration schools) had libraries/media centers in 1990-91 as did public schools serving few such students (i.e., less than 20 percent free or reduced-price lunch recipients).

Approximately 18 percent of public school libraries/media centers and 54 percent of private school libraries/media centers did not have trained librarians/media specialists working on either a full- or part-time basis in 1990-91 (table 2). The most pronounced instances of the lack of trained librarians/media specialists were at the elementary level and among schools with fewer than 300 students. In these cases, far fewer of the private schools had librarian/media specialist resources upon which to draw than public schools. Conversely, librarians/media specialists were most likely to be available in secondary schools and in schools of larger size.

Recommended staffing levels for libraries/media centers are not being met by many schools; however, where staff are present, they do influence the content of instruction.

The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) and the Association of Educational Communication and Technology (AECT) recommend that, at a minimum, every school library have at least one full-time professional librarian and one full-time aide.

Table 1. Percentage of public and private schools with libraries/media centers, by selected school characteristics, 1990-91

	Public Schools	Private Schools
All schools	95.8	86.8
Elementary	96.9	86.1
Secondary	94.8	94.1
School size		
< 300 students	89.5	84.1
300-599 students	98.3	98.6
≥ 600 students	99.1	99.3
Free/reduced-price lunch recipients		
< 20%	95.8	N/A
20-49%	97.0	N/A
≥ 50%	94.6	N/A

N/A indicates that the item was not included on the Private School Questionnaire.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1990-91 (School Questionnaire).

Table 2. Percentage of public and private school libraries/media centers without full- or part-time librarians/media specialists, by selected school characteristics, 1990-91

	Public Schools	Private Schools
All schools	17.9	54.0
Elementary	20.2	61.0
Secondary	9 6	15.5
School size		
< 300 students	33.1	63.3
300-599 students	14.0	24.4
≥ 600 students	8.6	4.9
Free/reduced-price lunch recipients		
< 20%	16.3	N/A
20-49%	17.0	N/A
≥ 50%	20.9	N/A

N/A indicates that the item was not included on the Private School Questionnaire.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1990-91 (School Questionnaire).

IR 95 579

Table 3. Percentage of public and private schools with libraries/media centers that fail to meet AASL and AECT recommended staffing levels, 1990-91

	Public Schools	Private Schools
All schools	27.6	67.9
Elementary	31.2	75.1
Secondary	15.9	27.2
School size		
< 300 students	59.4	77.3
300-599 students	19.3	40.9
≥ 600 students	8.1	9.9
Free/reduced-price lunch recipients		
< 20%	24.0	N/A
20-49%	29.0	N/A
≥ 50%	29.9	N/A

N/A indicates that the item was not included on the Private School Questionnaire.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1990-91 (School Questionnaire).

Table 4. Percentage of public and private school teachers and principals in schools with librarians/media specialists who report librarian/media specialist involvement in the instructional process, 1990-91

	Public Schools	Private Schools
Teachers strongly agree that they work with librarians/ media specialists in planning instruction	29.4	28.8
Principals report librarians/media specialists have "a great deal" of influence over establishing curriculum	13.9	28.6

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1990-91 (Administrator and Teacher Questionnaires).

In 1990-91, more than one-quarter of public schools with libraries/media centers failed to meet this standard. Among private schools, approximately two-thirds of those sites with libraries/media centers failed to staff them with a full-time librarian/media specialist and a full-time aide (table 3). These findings must be tempered by school size considerations, however. Many of the public and private schools that do not meet the AASL/AECT recommendations are quite small, serving few students. For example, one-quarter of private schools serve fewer than 50 students (McLaughlin, O'Donnell, and Ries 1995). In these cases, the hiring of a full-time professional librarian/media specialist and a full-time library aide may represent a prohibitive cost.

In schools where librarians/media specialists were present, over one-quarter of the teachers reported that they were involved in the instructional process (table 4). In 1990-91, about 29 percent of both public and private school teachers reported that they planned with librarians/media specialists for integration of library/media center services in their teaching. A similar percentage of private school principals reported that librarians/media specialists had "a great deal" of influence over establishing curriculum, as compared to about 14 percent of public school principals.

Discussion

Education reform has prompted increased attention to the role school libraries/media centers might play in applying new technology and developing new teaching methods. Some analysts argue that libraries have a crucial role in developing computer literacy and educating students in the use of modern information technologies (Lance, Welborn, and Hamilton-Pennell 1992). A number of observers also have argued that expanding the function of libraries is a key prerequisite to meeting the National Education Goals (Stripling 1992). What data from the 1990-91 SASS show, however, is a mixed picture of library/media center resources. Libraries/media centers are in most public and private schools in the nation, but are understaffed in many cases, particularly in small schools (Ingersoll and Han 1994). When library/media center facilities and staff are available, between one-quarter and one-third of teachers "strongly agree" that they work with library/media center staff in planning instruction. What is needed is additional examination of the characteristics of schools that effectively use their library resources and of the sorts of barriers that prevent the greater availability and use of these resources.

References:

Choy, S.P., Henke, R.R., Alt, M.N., Medrich, E.A., and Bobbitt, S.A. (1993). *Schools and Staffing in the United States: A Statistical Profile, 1990-91*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement (NCES Report No. 93-146).

Ingersoll, R. and Han, M. (1994). *School Library Media Centers in the United States: National Data, 1990-91*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement (NCES Report No. 94-326).

Lance, K.C., Welborn, L., and Hamilton-Pennell, C. (1992). *The Impact of School Library Media Centers on Academic Achievement*. Denver, CO: State Library and Adult Education Office, Colorado Department of Education.

McLaughlin, D.H., O'Donnell, C.A., and Ries, L. (1995). *Private Schools in the United States: A Statistical Profile, 1990-91*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement (NCES Report No. 95-330).

Stripling, B.K. (1992). *Libraries for the National Education Goals*. Syracuse, NY: ERIC Clearinghouse on Information Resources, Syracuse University.

Issue Briefs present information on education topics of current interest. All estimates shown are based on samples and are subject to sampling variability. All differences reported are statistically significant at the .05 level. In the design, conduct, and data processing of NCES surveys, efforts are made to minimize the effects of nonsampling errors, such as item nonresponse, measurement error, data processing error, or other systematic error.

This Issue Brief was prepared by Eileen O'Brien, Policy Studies Associates, and by Richard Ingersoll and Robert Rosal, American Institutes for Research. To obtain standard errors or definitions of terms for this Issue Brief, or to obtain additional information about the 1990-91 Schools and Staffing Survey, contact Charles H. Hammer (202) 219-1330. To order additional copies of this Issue Brief or other NCES publications, call 1-800-424-1616.